(c) whether the rate of interest is decided every year; and

(d) the reasons for not taking a policy decision on a long term basis?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI K. CHANDRA SEKHAR RAO): (a) No, Sir. The Central Government has ratified the interest @ 9.5% for the year 2004-05 to be credited to the accounts of the members of the Employees' Provident Fund.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) As per the provisions of the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provision Act, 1952, rate of interest is decided on an annual basis depending on the earning of the interest on the amount invested according to the Pattern of Investment as approved by the Ministry of Finance.

Assistance to plantation workers in Tamil Nadu

1955. SHRI S.P.M. SYED KHAN: Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether any scheme is being implemented by Government for the welfare of tea/cardamom plantation workers;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the details of Government's assistance extended to tea/cardamom plantation workers particulary in Tamil Nadu during the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI K. CHANDRA SEKHAR RAO): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Tea Board has welfare schemes for the benefit of tea plantation workers. The schemes are supplemental in nature as the tea garden management has the primary responsibility of looking after the welfare of workers. Tea Board provides financial assistance for construction of school buildings/colleges, hospitals/clinics and capital grant towards purchase of medical equipments, ambulance etc.

Spices Board is awarding educational stipend to the children of the cardamom estate workers and is also extending grant-in-aid to educational

and medical institutions located in cardamom growing tracts for the welfare of cardamom plantation workers.

(c) The expenditure incurred in Tamil Nadu under various labour welfare schemes of the Board during the last three years is reproduced below:

Year	Education	Health	Sports
2002-03	35,52,126	7,28,850	54,000
2003-04	9,01,278	8,90,680	30,000
2004-05	12,72,169	18,96,450	84,551

The Spices Board have reported 37 schools and 395 students as the beneficiary of the programmes for the year 2004-05. During the year 2004-05 the expenditure incurred is Rs. 2,02,050.00.

Child labour in Mines

1956. SHRI SHAHID SIDDIQUI: Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the inhuman treatment to small children in the Iron Ore queries in Karnataka;

(b) if so, the action being taken to stop this exploitation of child labour in these mines; and

(c) whether Government have taken any action against these query and mine owners?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI K. CHANDRA SEKHAR RAO): (a) Engagement of child labour in the mines and mining related activities is prohibited under the provisions of Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986. As per the report received from Govt. of Karnataka, there is no evidence of child labour engaged in mines in organized sector. However, in case of informal digging activities being carried out in some parts of the State mainly by the migrant labourers, there may be stray instances of children assisting their parents in work.

(b) and (c) Government of Karnataka is very vigilant on the issue of engagement of child labour in mines and related activities and has taken adequate remedial steps to prevent engagement of children in these